

Message Text

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ACTION H-03

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PANAMA 4611

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OREP, PN PQ

SUBJECT: CODEL LEGGETT

1. CONGRESSMEN ROBERT L. LEGGETT (D. CALIF.) RALPH H. METCALFE (D. ILL.) AND GENE ENYDER (R.KY.) ACCOMPANIED BY THEIR STAFF AIDES CALLED ON AMBASSADOR SAYRE AUGUST 24. THE CHIEFS OF ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL SECTIONS OF EMBASSY WERE PRESENT. THE AMBASSADOR BRIEFED THE CONGRESSMEN CONCERNING THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SITUATIONS IN PANAMA. SOME OF THE PRINCIPAL ISSUES DISCUSSED DURING WIDE-RANGING CONVERSATION WERE THE U.S. AID PROGRAM, MALDISTRIBUTION OF INCOME IN PANAMA AND GENERAL TORRIJOS' EFFORTS TO PLACE MORE EMPHASIS ON THE IMPOVERISHED RURAL AREAS, U.S.-PANAMANIAN RELATIONS CONCERNING THE CANAL ZONE AND THE LATIN AMERICAN SCHOOL SYSTEM IN CZ.

2. CONGRESSMAN LEGGETT INQUIRED CONCERNING THE AID PROGRAM AND COMMENTED THAT THE ALLIANCE FOR PROGRESS HAD BEEN A FAILURE. AFTER TEN YEARS, THERE WAS LITTLE PROGRESS IN DEVELOPMENT. THE AMBASSADOR REPLIED THAT HE DID NOT AGREE. HE DESCRIBED THE AID PROGRAM IN PANAMA AND SAID IT HAS PROVIDED AN IMPORTANT STIMULUS TO PANAMA'S ECONOMIC GROTTH WHICH WAS RUNNING AT 8-9 PERCENT PER YEAR. WITHOUT THE AID PROGRAM THINGS WOULD BE MUCH WORSE.

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3. CONGRESSMAN LEGGETT ASKED THE AMBASSADOR FOR HIS

"EASY SOLUTION TO THE CANAL ISSUE." THE AMBASSADOR SAID THERE WERE NO EASY SOLUTIONS. HUMAN BEINGS WERE INVOLVED AND ANY SOLUTION WOULD BE HARD TO REACH. HE MADE SOME SUGGESTIONS CONCERNING ACTIONS THAT THE U.S. SHOULD TAKE IN ITS OWN INTEREST, WHETHER OR NOT PROGRESS WAS MADE IN TREATY NEGOTIATIONS. THESE ACTIONS WOULD BE TO TURN OVER RESPONSIBILITY FOR LATIN AMERICAN SCHOOLS TO THE PANAMANIAN GOVERNMENT AND TO GIVE PANAMANA JURISDICTION OVER PRIVATE BUSINESS ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE CANAL ZONE. OTHER SIMILAR ACTIVITIES NOT ESSENTIAL TO THE OPERATION AND DEFENSE OF THE CANAL BY THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT SHOULD ALSO BE TRANSFERRED TO PANAMANIAN CONTROL. IT WAS AGREED THAT SUCH ACTIONS COULD ONLY BE ACCOMPLISHED BY LEGISLATION.

4. CONGRESSMAN LEGGETT SAID IT WOULD BE EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO GET PIECEMEAL LEGISLATION FOR CHANGES IN THE CANAL ZONE AND HE FEARED THAT BILLS PROPOSED DEALING WITH ONLY PART OF THE PROBLEM WOULD RUN INTO A "BUZZ SAW" IN THE CONGRESS. THE AMBASSADOR REPLIED THAT HE WAS AWARE OF THE DIFFICULTIES, BUT THAT THE U.S. GOVERNMENT HAD TO WORK TO IMPROVE THE U.S. POSITION IN PANAMA AND THAT CONGRESS HAD TO BE FULLY INFORMED OF THE REALITIES OF THE SITUATION. HE WAS CONFIDENT THAT IF CONGRESS UNDERSTOOD THE PROBLEMS IT WOULD BE SYMPATHETIC ABOUT SOLUTIONS.

5. CONGRESSMAN METCALFE SAID HE HAD BEEN TALKING WITH PEOPLE IN THE LATIN AMERICAN COMMUNITY IN THE CANAL ZONE FOR THE PAST TWO DAYS AND THAT HE DISAGREED WITH THE AMBASSADOR'S SUGGESTIONS THAT RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE LATIN AMERICAN SCHOOLS IN THE CANAL ZONE SHOULD BE TURNED OVER TO PANAMANIAN. HIS VIEW WAS THAT THESE SCHOOLS SHOULD BE INTERGRATED INTO THE ENGLISH SPEAKING SCHOOL SYSTEM AND THUS ELIMINATE DISCRIMINATION IN THE CANAL ZONE SCHOOL SYSTEM. THE AMBASSADOR EXPLAINED THAT THESE PEOPLE WERE PANAMANIAN WHO EVENTUALLY WOULD HAVE TO
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MAKE THEIR LIVES IN PANAMA AND IF THEY WENT ON TO UNIVERSITIES, THEY WOULD PROBABLY ATTEND THE UNIVERSITY OF PANAMA. THEREFORE IT MADE MORE SENSE FOR THEM TO GO TO SPANISH SPEAKING SCHOOLS UNDER PANAMANIAN CONTROL. HE POINTED OUT THAT THIS IS PROBABLY THE ONLY PLACE IN THE WORLD WHERE THE U.S. GOVERNMENT ASSUMES RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE EDUCATION OF CITIZENS OF ANOTHER COUNTRY. THE AMBASSADOR EMPHASIZED THAT HE AGREED WITH CONGRESSMAN METCALFE THAT DISCRIMINATION SHOULD NOT BE CONDONED IN SCHOOLS OPERATED UNDER U.S.

JURISDICTION, BUT HE DISAGREED WITH THE CONGRESSMAN
CONCERNING THE BEST WAY OF RESOLVING THIS PROBLEM.
CONGRESSMAN SNYDER SEEMED TO AGREE THAT INTEGRATING
THE LATIN AMERICAN SCHOOLS INTO THE ENGLISH SPEAKING
SCHOOLS WOULD NOT BE THE RIGHT SOLUTION.

6. COMMENT: THE DISCUSSION WAS CORDIAL, AND THE
CONGRESSMEN APPEARED TO BE IN A RELAXED MOOD.
SAYRE

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